

News Release
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Williams disappointed by indecisive PUB report on Muskrat development

Former Premier Danny Williams said today that he is both disappointed in and disturbed by the recently released Public Utilities Board (PUB) Report on the Muskrat Falls development. Williams said the inability of the PUB to reach a recommendation after 9 months and millions of dollars is unacceptable; and that past statements had already shown a bias against the project.

“When I read the report brought down by the PUB, I was deeply disappointed in the indecisive nature of the report; and more so I was troubled by the conclusions put forward by the board largely based on opinions of private citizens as opposed to the experts at Nalcor and Manitoba Hydro,” said Mr. Williams. “Unfortunately, if you look back at the comments made by Board early in this process it became clear that opinions had already been formed. I have never before seen a quasi-judicial body make such negative and prejudicial statements in the middle of a review. It concerned me greatly at the time, but I had hoped those careless comments would not have carried over into the final report. Clearly, those opinions formed the basis of the final document as the board had backed itself into a corner several months ago with such strong statements.”

Williams went onto say that he still fully supports the Muskrat Falls development, and is troubled by some of the irresponsible commentary that has been put forward in the public domain – much of which appears to be held in high regard by the PUB in their review. While legitimate concerns and questions serve to bring about the best project possible, inaccuracies and fear mongering serve only to inhibit progress and future prosperity for the province.

“I have a serious concern that the PUB quotes extensively the personal opinions of former bureaucrats and academia, while ignoring the world-class experts at Nalcor,” added Williams. “They even ignored their own hired experts at Manitoba Hydro. The team at Manitoba Hydro asked some responsible and appropriate questions in their review of the project, but ultimately confirmed the fact that Muskrat Falls is the least cost option. It makes absolutely no sense to me for the PUB to ignore the people at Nalcor who have the experience, the knowledge, and the education to make the right decisions. These professionals have absolutely nothing to gain by moving forward with a project that is not in the best interest of the province.”

Given the endorsement of the project by the Consumer Advocate, Manitoba Hydro (with conditions) and representatives from all political parties, the abdication of the PUB in making a recommendation is baffling, said Williams.

"I am concerned that perhaps the board wanted to wash their hands of any responsibility of this project in the very unlikely event that something goes wrong. The history of the Upper Churchill is a powerful force in this province and some people are just simply too fearful of the ghost of 'Churchill past' to move forward with what is a great project. But we must never fear making bold decisions for great rewards."

Williams asserts that there has never been a better time in the history of the province to move forward with this development. "The stars are aligned. We have in place the agreements with our Aboriginal partners; we have a federal loan guarantee worth up to a billion dollars; we have passed the environmental assessment; the world markets make financing the project very feasible; we have an agreement in place with our Atlantic Partners to circumvent Quebec; and we have an incredible opportunity to make Newfoundland and Labrador a province based on almost 100% clean, renewable energy. And the icing on the cake is that this project puts Newfoundland and Labrador in the energy business. We need this power and we need this project."